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## **Secretary Bicha Receives National Award for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect**

Department of Children and Families Secretary Reggie Bicha has been honored with the 2009 Commissioner's Award for his tireless commitment to protect children and strengthen families in communities across Wisconsin. Presented by the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), this honor recognizes only one individual from each of the 50 states for significant contributions toward the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

"I am truly honored to receive this award and accept it on behalf of the entire Department," Secretary Bicha said. "At DCF, protecting children will always be our highest priority. This isn't a just a mission statement. Every day children must be safer, healthier and stronger because of the work we do."

Before the Department officially opened its doors on July 1<sup>st</sup> of last year, Secretary Bicha actively engaged human service directors, foster parents, child care providers, tribal leaders and local officials to design a new state agency that would refocus, retool and reprioritize services for Wisconsin families.

One example how Secretary Bicha's fresh approach and comprehensive vision have directly impacted child welfare can be seen in the steps taken within the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare. To improve practice and performance, more than 500 children in out-of-home care received medical evaluations from pediatric specialists. Additionally, DCF staff is reviewing the case practice received by more than 500 children. The scope and scale of this review is unprecedented in Milwaukee and the State of Wisconsin.

"We've made great strides toward enhancing the safety of children across the state, but our work is far from finished," Secretary Bicha said. "All kids deserve a safe and loving place to call home. We cannot rest until this is a reality in Wisconsin."

The Commissioner's Awards were given out as part of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect. This year's conference focused on supporting children through prevention and other community services.

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